Scholarly Article on: *Fading Echoes* (by Muhammad Saleem)

A Translation of Hindko Folklore *Quainchi*
written by Ahmed Hussain Mujahid)

Article **Written by: Shagufta Aamer (for Bazme Ilm-o-Fun, Hazara)** 24th April, 2026

It was one of those wintry evenings when Silence outside weaves her magic on the inmates: one sits in front of the fire (in our case, the heater), in the company of the darling daughter, who is pursuing her literature degree from the Government College Lahore, and randomly discusses the celebrated works of literature. "Mama!", her voice quizzically asks, "I wonder if we have any work of Hindko literature in our personal library." Before I could reply, she started rummaging through the books on the shelf close to her. No sooner had I started racing my mind to come up with a title than she handed me a book. "Please read it to me; it sounds interesting". I glanced at the book and said: "NO way! I can't read it; it's in Hindko!" "So what? You must try it for me". I hesitatingly took it from her, read the title, and thought to give it a try as it promised a musical tale, calling my interest. Initially, I struggled with the written version of my own native language, but within no time, it caught me in its strong hold like the Wedding Guest in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, leaving no option but to complete it in one go. This was my first interaction with Ahmed Hussain Mujahid's literary piece, *Quainchi* – the first ever book in Hindko that I read, thoroughly marvelled at, and is now my friend! Thank you, Mujahid Sahb, for adding this fantastic composition to the treasures of Hindko literature!

The taste of *Quainchi*'s lilting verses was still fresh when I received a copy of its translation in English. Deep down, it was as if the Heavens had answered my wish! The gripping narrative of this folk ballad was worthy of reaching a wider scale, and perhaps it was time when the story of Munshi and Halima found their due place in the global rhyme. Thus, with a heart beating on the melody of *Quainchi,* I started reading *Fading Echoes* – the title that, in the words of its writer, Mr. Muhammad Saleem, "becomes a metaphorical instrument, capable of severing the very core of one's being when unrequited love descends into a torrent of sighs, tears, and yearning".

For me, the joy of reading this versified tale is manifold: the sense of belonging to Hazara and somehow related to Mr Saleem through my father was already an exhilaration; the medium he chose to write in and the genre he decided to translate are also no ordinary pleasures. And the icing on the cake is that his degree in English literature is a common ground that we share.

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Mr Saleem has been successful in upholding the fidelity theory in translation, or what we call a proto-text. It is not just a verbatim adherence, but also prioritization of cultural accuracy, keeping the cultural/local nuances intact. "Sawa", "Faqira", "Kala", and "Nazira" stimulate our imagination, synthesizing the global language with the local vernacular, until we stop at "Big Aunt" as "Tai" gave more familiar vibes in *Quainchi*. Working in the fashion of *masnavi* (literal meaning: doubled/paired) in overall organization and in metrical arrangement; however, the poet has blended the mediaeval chanson ballade or ballad tradition in the treatment of this narrative: the musicality, the dramatic twists, the repetitions, these are the perfect recipe for oral transmission and retention. Moreover, da-DUM or iambic (mostly pentameter) serves as the foundational rhythm in English poetry, and the same we find here, albeit loosely. All in all, these features have added to the fluidity of the narrative.

Here, I will zoom in on the specific part of *Fading Echoes* for the reason that in *Quainchi*, it never failed to cast its spell each time it appeared, I mean, the quainchi itself, stunningly striking with its piercing, haunting refrain,

لگی قینچی دل دی

For the delight of the ears, first, I will read from Mr Mujahid's book and will read its translated version by Mr Saleem: Here it goes: Page 103:
From the book)
Page 103:

قینچی

لگی قینچی دل دی تے دل ڈاہڈا تنگ اے
چل اُٹھ آ وے منشی ! خدا اسدا سنگ اے
لگی قینچی دِل دی
چل اُٹھ آ وے منشی ! بلائیاں دا کے اے
گلاں بدھ کے کرسن گرائیاں دا کے اے
لگی قینچی دِل دی
ذرا بھی تراہ نینھ پکڑدا مڑا دِل
اِسی ویلے ، اِس جائی منشی مکو مِل
لگی قینچی دِل دی
مکو بارہ موسلے کو گھور نال اپڑیں
تڑی بانہہ تے کھولاں میں ایہہ بال اپڑیں
لگی قینچی دِل دی

Fading Echoes

The cruel shears of sorrow, they tear at my core,

A searing pain, unbearable to ignore.

Munshi, my love, return with haste, I implore,

For God watches over us, and hope lingers evermore.

The cruel shears of sorrow, they pierce me anew,

Oh, Munshi, why tarry? Let whispers accrue.

The villagers' taunts, a storm I shall weather through,

As long as you return, my love, ever true.

The cruel shears of sorrow, they snip at my heart,

My nerves set on edge, torn and ripped apart.

Come quickly, my love, ease this searing smart,

For in your presence, solace I impart.

The cruel shears of sorrow, they wound me so deep,

And then page 129 of Hindko wails:

لگی قینچی دِل دی تے دِل ڈاہڈا تنگ اے
بنڑاں بچ چلی دی وچھوڑے دی چھنگ اے
لگی قینچی دل دی
کسی ہور جائی جوان ہویا منشی
بنڑاں بچ لہو تے لہان ہویا منشی
لگی قینچی دل دی

The English version converts the poignant refrain to intermittent anaphora: "Heart snips with pain..." and reads as: (Page 136)

Fading Echoes

"Heart snips with pain, a scissor's cruel decree,
Darshi's wind whispers of a love to flee.
Heart snips with pain, Munshi, a stranger here,
Bathed in this forest's blood, a growing fear.

And lastly, on page 164, the final two couplets moan:

بنڑاں بچ کھلی دی رتن جوگ اے منشی
مرے کولو پچھ آ کے سوگ اے منشی
لگی قینچی دل دی

حلیمہ تے نہ میں ، حلیمہ دی روح آں
انیہرے دا غار آں ، غماں دا میں کھوہ آں
لگی قینچی دل دی
بنڑاں بچ امیداں دی ہوئی کٹائی
مکو کھڑ کے اَگ لاؤ منشی دی جائی
لگی قینچی دل دی

Mourning hangs heavy, shattering dreams.

(Halima's ghost, a hollow shell,

A cavern of darkness, where sorrows dwell.

To which the translation on 16 is:

Darshi's embrace, a promise betrayed,

Hope and desire forever decayed.

Burn me, not Munshi, set this heart free,

From this endless torment, finally."

This is a pang of separation, a cry of bruised love, a dirge of the fading echoes of the heart!

اور وہ جو ہامیں "قینچی" کے دیباچے کے آخر میں لکھتے ہیں: "داستان سنانے والا اور داستان سننے والے جانے کہاں گم ہو گئے ہیں"۔ تو میں کہتی ہوں کہ کہانی سنانے والا اور داستان سننے والے تو شاید گم ہو بھی جائیں، کہانی بہرحال زندہ رہے گی، کہانی امر ہے کیوں کہ کہانی صرف کتابوں میں نہیں لکھی جاتی، کچھ کہانیاں دلوں میں بھی دفن ہوتی ہیں

I stop my reflections here, but I won't stop to say thank you to Modernage and the organisers of Bazme Ilm o Fun for inviting me to talk about this beautiful endeavour of Mr Muhammad Saleem. I feel honoured to be part of this literary gathering in which the celebrated personalities of Hazara are in attendance. Some of my students, who I am teaching a course in poetry in the 6th semester of BS English, are also sitting here. Indeed, it is a rare occasion for them also to be in the company of the august people. Once again, I thank everyone and wish you all the very best!

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